



Panhandle News

BENEWAH, BONNER, BOUNDARY, KOOTENAI & SHOSHONE COUNTIES

ECONOMIC TRENDS

As autumn leaves fell between September and October, so did Panhandle employment. The Panhandle counties almost always lose jobs between September and October. Agriculture, Forest Service, lawn care, landscaping and other outdoor jobs dry up as weather worsens and summer residents and tourists disappear, curbing retail and service employment. Only two sectors usually add jobs. Education finishes its final hiring in September and October, and construction usually peaks in October as contractors add extra hands to finish projects before the snow flies. The end-of-summer impact on the retail sector depends on how early the stores and national catalog retailer Coldwater Creek add workers for the Christmas season.

This year was a fairly normal September-to-October transition. As Panhandle Table 1 shows, the Coeur d'Alene Metropolitan Statistical Area encompassing all of Kootenai County lost about 140 jobs. Retailers and wholesalers were expecting a good Christmas season, which they got, so they hired extra workers early. Professional and business services lost jobs as landscaping and surveying experienced normal seasonal declines. Natural resources and mining fell as expected with gravel pits and logging companies reducing work. Leisure and hospitality lost 700 jobs as it normally does when summer tourist attractions and golf courses close and hotels and restaurants scale back.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes

- The Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes, the 79-mile trail along a former Union Pacific railroad bed running between Mullan and Plummer, recently won the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Phoenix Award

Panhandle Table 1: Coeur d'Alene MSA Labor Force & Employment Kootenai County

	Oct 2006*	Sep 2006	Oct 2005	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	69,520	69,590	68,540	-0.1	1.4
Unemployed	2,280	2,390	2,590	-4.6	-12.0
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.3	3.4	3.8		
Total Employment	67,240	67,200	65,950	0.1	2.0
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	69,300	69,880	68,310	-0.8	1.4
Unemployed	1,800	1,870	2,050	-3.7	-12.2
% of Labor Force Unemployed	2.6	2.7	3.0		
Total Employment	67,500	68,010	66,260	-0.7	1.9
JOB BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS	56,520	56,660	53,990	-0.2	4.7
Goods-Producing Industries	11,430	11,500	10,920	-0.6	4.7
Natural Resources & Mining	520	530	480	-1.9	8.3
Construction	6,290	6,280	5,770	0.2	9.0
Manufacturing	4,620	4,690	4,670	-1.5	-1.1
Wood Product Manufacturing	950	970	1,070	-2.1	-11.2
Other Manufacturing	3,670	3,720	3,600	-1.3	1.9
Service-Providing Industries	45,090	45,160	43,070	-0.2	4.7
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	10,170	10,080	9,950	0.9	2.2
Wholesale Trade	1,460	1,440	1,360	1.4	7.4
Retail Trade	7,670	7,600	7,500	0.9	2.3
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	1,040	1,040	1,090	0.0	-4.6
Information	980	980	1,010	0.0	-3.0
Financial Activities	2,930	2,930	2,790	0.0	5.0
Professional & Business Services	6,520	6,580	6,000	-0.9	8.7
Educational & Health Services	5,960	5,670	5,400	5.1	10.4
Leisure & Hospitality	7,250	7,950	7,010	-8.8	3.4
Other Services	1,410	1,440	1,430	-2.1	-1.4
Government Education	3,760	3,430	3,680	9.6	2.2
Government Administration	5,380	5,360	5,100	0.4	5.5
Government Tribes	730	740	700	-1.4	4.3

* Preliminary estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

as 2006's best brownfields project in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes representatives attending the EPA Boston conference on remediating land that has become contaminated included Old Mission State Park Manager Bill Scudder, who manages the trail from Mullan to Harrison; Gary Honeyman of Union Pacific Railroad; Mike Cooper of MFG, the engineering firm that designed and oversaw the trail's creation and Phil Cernera, representing the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, which manages the trail from Harrison to Plummer.

Bonner County

- Mountain West Bank, based in Coeur d'Alene, plans to build a financial center that will anchor West-pointe Plaza, a new development in southwest Sandpoint. Mountain West will occupy half of a three-story, 18,388-square-foot building. Other tenants will occupy the rest. Construction on the center, which will feature drive-up windows and an ATM, should be completed by early 2008. The new Mountain West branch, which will include a loan office, will employ six people. Mountain West's two current branches in the Sandpoint area will remain open. The plaza may also include a 30,000-square-foot grocery store and two smaller buildings for retail and service businesses.
- Coldwater Creek, Bonner County's largest private-sector employer and an active supporter of local economic development, recently contributed nearly \$50,000 to North Idaho College's satellite campus at the Bonner Mall in Ponderay. The donation is paying for technology and equipment for the school's new facility.
- Sterling and Cheryl Rink recently opened Cruise-n-Lube in downtown Priest River. They believe customers will find the shop fun and family-oriented as well as efficient. The shop in the newly renovated building offers oil changes, fluid exchanges and wiper blade service.
- Starbucks recently opened a 1,700-square-foot store in the new Ponderay Plaza along U.S. Highway 95 in Ponderay. It employs nearly 20 people and is the second Starbucks in the Sandpoint area.

Boundary County

- Riley Creek Lumber announced in November that it will not recall the 65 workers it laid off from its Moyie Springs mill on July 24. Riley Creek hoped that lumber prices would rise enough after a couple of months to allow it to recall workers. However, lumber prices fell even lower. The Random Lengths composite price for framing labor per thousand board feet fell 13 percent from \$308 on July 21 to \$269 on Nov. 10. A year before, on Nov. 11, 2005, the price was \$363. Riley Creek permanently laid off another six workers when it made its November announcement. Fortunately, most of the laid-off workers have found employment, and the others are exploring the re-training, educational and career resources provided by Idaho Commerce and Labor's Bonners Ferry office. Nearly 90 people continue to work for Riley Creek in Moyie Springs. Since early 2003, Boundary County wood products employment has fallen from 410 to 250.

- North Idaho College's satellite campus in Bonners Ferry, which opened in September, plans to offer 10 credit classes this spring. County residents are demonstrating a lot of pent-up demand for college courses and professional-technical programs. In addition, some residents are earning the equivalent of a high school degree through the GED program. The Bonners Ferry campus also is accepting high school students for dual enrollment programs, allowing them to earn college credits for classes they take while still in high school. The campus also will custom-design training programs for employees of local businesses.

Kootenai County

- After years without a bank, Spirit Lake, a town of 1,500 in northwestern Kootenai County, is getting one. Inland Northwest Bank, based in Spokane, plans to open a 2,300-square-foot branch this summer with two drive-up lanes and an ATM just south of Miller's Food City. The bank will employ four people. The nearest bank is in Rathdrum, 12 miles south.
- Ascension Snowboards is relocating to a 4,800-square-foot building in Post Falls, where it began producing customized snowboards this fall and opened a retail store in November. Founder and owner John Minor came up with the idea for Ascension when he noticed how many graphics on snowboards were offensive and inappropriate for kids. Ascension provides alternatives acceptable to both parents and kids. It lets its customers choose the color and graphics for their snowboards. Most customers place their orders on Ascension's Web site. Within days of placing the order, customers receive their customized snowboards. Ascension employs about a dozen people. Minor hopes to produce 14,000 snowboards in 2007 and 30,000 in subsequent years.
- Kootenai Medical Center, the community hospital in Coeur d'Alene, recently installed a \$2.5 million, state-of-the-art computerized tomography scanner so fast that it can make real-time images of a beating heart. Most scanners give less detailed images and require beta-blockers to slow patients' hearts before the scan. The center is only the eighth health institution in the world to install the scanner.
- Jake's Dry Dock Store opened in November in Coeur d'Alene. It sells t-shirts, caps, backpacks and clothing featuring the Life is Good brand.
- Golf Digest/BusinessWeek rated Coeur d'Alene as America's seventh hottest retirement destination for golfers in 2006. The ranking considers the num-

ber of golf courses built or being built since 2000 as well as scenery, weather, culture, health care and other lifestyle variables.

- Lifestream Technologies recently closed in Riverbend Commerce Park in Post Falls. Founded in Sandpoint in 1992, it began manufacturing fingerstick cholesterol-testing devices that provided information within minutes. After moving to Post Falls in 1998, its employment peaked near 40 in early 2001. Fewer than 10 people worked for Lifestream in 2006.
- Bambino's Pizza and Gelato recently opened in Coeur d'Alene. The restaurant serves lunch and dinner and features organic food with an Italian flavor, including pizza, paninis and pasta dishes.

Shoshone County

- Sterling Mining Co. is making progress towards re-opening the Sunshine Mine, the most productive silver mine in world history. The mine employed eight people at the beginning of 2006. Currently, 30 employees just completed revitalizing the mine's boilers and steam heating distribution system. For the next few months, the crews are renovating the mine's ore-processing facilities. Sterling expects ore production to start in the fourth quarter of 2007 or the first quarter of 2008.
- Another historic mine may reopen in the next few years. Strategic Nevada Resources Corp., based in Vancouver, British Columbia, paid \$650,000 recently for the Crescent Mine, which closed in 1986. Located between the Sunshine and Bunker Hill mines, the Crescent was acquired by Shoshone County and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency during the bankruptcy of the Bunker Hill Mine in 1991. When deep underground mines like the Crescent close, their enormous pumps are shut off, and the mines fill with water. Because the Crescent is flooded, significant engineering and logistical problems must be resolved before ore production can begin.
- The Lucky Friday Mine near Mullan employs about 200 workers these days and could be the source of more jobs in the future. The mine's owner, Hecla Mining, says it has identified nearly as many ore resources for the future as have been mined in the entire history of the prolific silver and lead mine. Hecla is considering increasing the Lucky Friday's production capacity.
- Shoshone County is one of 12 Idaho communities to receive expert assistance with problems caused by explosive growth. Last winter, the Idaho Legisla-

ture earmarked \$250,000 to create the Rural Idaho Growth Management Technical Assistance Program, under which Idaho Commerce & Labor matches growth and planning experts with community leaders. The experts will help local leaders develop zoning and other ordinances to effectively manage growth. After more than two decades of decline, Shoshone County is experiencing population growth and a construction and real estate boom not seen there since 1915. Managed growth and affordable housing have become major concerns for many county residents.

- At the start of the ski season, Silver Mountain unveiled its newest attraction — a 600-foot-long snow-tubing course called the Prospector Adventure Zone. After tubing down the hill, visitors can use a conveyor lift to return to the top. The conveyor lift is similar to people movers used at many airports. Tubing parks are a new trend in the ski industry, offering entertainment for family members who don't ski or snowboard.
- Mary-Gail Powers opened eMGees on Nov. 3 in Kellogg. The antiques and collectibles shop also sells jewelry, soap, scarves and candles made by local craftspeople. In the spring, Powers plans to offer lawn and garden items. The store will share space with Cut 'n Loose, a hair salon that Nancy Bishop will open in the next month or two.
- Elena Hayes opened A Fair World Shoppe at the Cedar Street Emporium in Wallace after Thanksgiving. The store sells all kinds of items handmade by native people from around the world, ensuring they receive a fair living wage for their work and a fair share of the profits from selling their work.
- Alpine Village Resort broke ground Nov. 10 on a luxury condominium development in Kellogg. The first of the development's four 21-unit buildings is slated for completion by August.

Kathryn Tacke, Regional Economist
1221 W. Ironwood Drive, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814
(208) 769-1558 ext. 3984
E-mail: kathryn.tacke@cl.idaho.gov